



WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS

State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Office of Economic Advisors

FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

BARRON, CHIPPEWA, CLARK, DUNN, EAU CLAIRE, PEPIN, PIERCE, POLK, ST. CROIX

May
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Seasonal job growth spurs lower unemployment rates

Unemployment rates in the counties of West Central Wisconsin dropped in April resulting in a regional unemployment rate that plummeted 1.1 percentage points. The April unemployment rate in the west central region was 5.2 percent, down from 6.2 percent in March and matched the rate of one year ago. In sync with the region and other metropolitan areas of Wisconsin, the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area unemployment rate declined to 4.7 percent in April from 5.7 percent in

March and was lower than the rate one year ago of 5.0 percent.

All but one of the state's 72 counties posted a lower unemployment rate in April as the State of Wisconsin rate, not seasonally adjusted, dropped 0.8 percentage points to 4.7 percent. Seasonally adjusted the state rate in April was 4.5 percent.

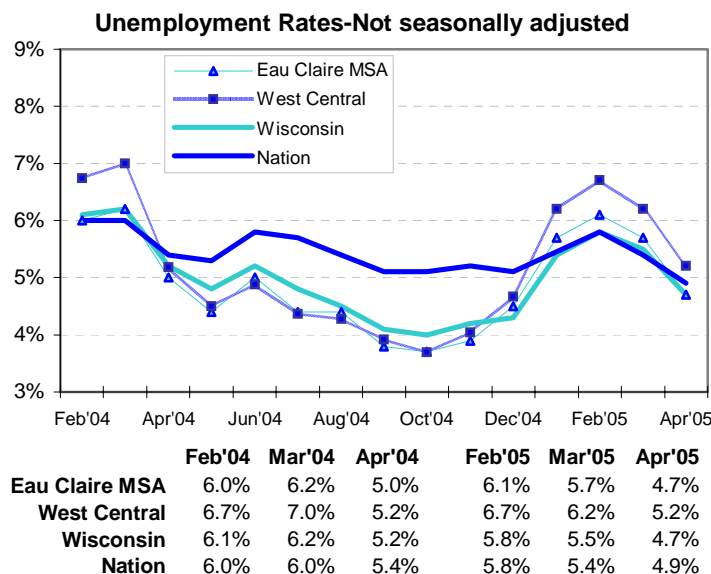
Simply put, local unemployment rates declined as the number of unemployed residents either returned to seasonal jobs or found new ones. The number of unemployed in the

region dropped from 15,250 in March to 12,640 in April. At the same time the number of employed in the nine-county area increased from 229,370 in March to 231,470 in April.

Many of the newly employed found jobs in construction and natural resources. Over one-third of the increase in jobs in April in West Central Wisconsin occurred with construction firms. The addition of 900 jobs in construction and natural resources is slightly higher than in the previous three years and is likely related to the warm temperatures in April that provided for an early start to outdoor projects.

Another 800 jobs in the region were added by old and new employers in leisure and hospitality. This increase in April is substantially greater than the typical increase and it too may be a reaction to the warmer weather and the opportunity to get a jump on the season.

Landscaping firms were also hiring in April. These jobs appear in the industry group that includes business services and in April employers in this group added nearly 400 jobs to the regional economy. Over half of those jobs were in the Eau Claire-



Civilian Labor Force Estimates* for West Central Wisconsin counties: April 2005

	Barron			Chippewa			Clark			Dunn			Eau Claire Co.		
	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04
Labor force	25,019	24,999	24,869	31,077	31,378	31,536	17,372	17,449	17,375	23,935	23,911	23,703	53,853	53,859	54,939
Employed	23,606	23,221	23,354	29,270	29,074	29,718	16,287	16,092	16,262	22,764	22,542	22,533	51,667	51,319	52,456
Unemployed	1,413	1,778	1,515	1,807	2,304	1,818	1,085	1,357	1,113	1,171	1,369	1,170	2,186	2,540	2,483
% unemployed	5.6	7.1	6.1	5.8	7.3	5.8	6.2	7.8	6.4	4.9	5.7	4.9	4.1	4.7	4.5
	Pepin			Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			West Central region		
	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04
Labor force	3,939	3,886	3,871	23,250	23,263	23,031	23,250	23,463	22,740	42,422	42,408	42,105	244,117	244,616	244,169
Employed	3,731	3,612	3,685	22,141	21,952	22,089	21,895	21,788	21,396	40,113	39,771	40,018	231,474	229,371	231,511
Unemployed	208	274	186	1,109	1,311	942	1,355	1,675	1,344	2,309	2,637	2,087	12,643	15,245	12,658
% unemployed	5.3	7.1	4.8	4.8	5.6	4.1	5.8	7.1	5.9	5.4	6.2	5.0	5.2	6.2	5.2

* not seasonally adjusted

Industry Employment Estimates for West Central Wisconsin: April 2005

(Employment in thousands)	Barron			Clark			Dunn			Pepin		
	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04
Total Nonfarm	21.3	21.1	21.4	10.1	10.0	10.0	16.7	16.4	16.4	2.2	2.1	2.2
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.1
Manufacturing	5.3	5.5	5.7	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.3	2.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Trade	3.6	3.6	3.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.6	2.5	2.6	0.5	0.5	0.5
Transportation & Utilities	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.1
Financial Activities	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	2.6	2.6	2.6	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.6	1.7	1.6	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.7	1.6	1.7	0.8	0.7	0.7	1.4	1.3	1.4	0.2	0.2	0.2
Info/Prof. & Bus.Serv./Other	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.4	1.4	1.4	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total Government	4.5	4.5	4.6	2.0	2.1	2.1	4.7	4.7	4.6	0.5	0.5	0.6
	Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			Eau Claire MSA		
	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04	Apr '05	Mar '05	Apr '04
Total Nonfarm	10.9	10.6	10.6	14.9	14.7	14.8	27.4	26.8	27.0	77.5	76.9	78.0
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.7	1.7	1.6	1.5	3.2	2.9	3.0
Manufacturing	0.8	0.8	0.8	3.6	3.6	3.7	5.4	5.4	5.5	10.3	10.3	10.3
Trade	0.9	0.9	1.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	4.5	4.4	4.4	12.4	12.6	13.0
Transportation & Utilities	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.1	1.0	1.0	2.9	2.8	2.9
Financial Activities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.3	1.3	1.3	3.6	3.6	3.8
Education & Health Services	1.2	1.2	1.2	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	13.0	13.0	12.6
Leisure & Hospitality	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1	1.2	1.1	3.2	3.0	3.1	7.0	6.7	7.4
Information/Prof. & Bus.Serv.	1.2	1.2	1.2	2.0	1.9	1.8	3.7	3.6	3.6	8.8	8.6	8.4
Other Services	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.7	3.7	3.7
Total Government	4.2	4.1	3.8	2.6	2.6	2.7	3.6	3.6	3.7	12.6	12.7	12.9

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2004 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

Chippewa metro area.

Employers in the Eau Claire metro area added a total of 2,600 jobs in April and, similar to the gains in the region, most of those jobs were with construction and leisure and hospitality employers. Construction employment increased from 2,900 jobs in March to 3,200 in April while leisure and hospitality employment grew from 6,700 jobs in March to 7,000 in April. Unlike the rural counties where there was a loss in manufacturing employment in April the number of manufacturing jobs in the metro area was unchanged.

Typical seasonal up-ticks in employment in some industries were absent from the April nonfarm estimates in the metro area but did appear in the rural counties of the region. Retail trade jobs generally increase in April as employers prep for the summer months. This is especially true with garden centers, both the permanent establishments and those that pop-up in parking lots. In

the metro area, however, the number of jobs in retail trade declined in April. Another seasonal increase in jobs that occurred in the rural counties but not in the metro area was in the public sector and the jobs associated with public parks and road maintenance. The rural counties showed an increase of 200 government jobs in April while the metro area showed a reduction of 100 jobs.

The net result was an increase of only 600 jobs in the Eau Claire metro area, the smallest increase in April since 2000. The impact of slow job growth was apparent in the weak increase in the number of employed residents. Total employment increased by only 500 in April to 80,900. Even that small job growth, however, cut the number of unemployed in the metro area from 4,800 in March to 4,000 residents in April, and that was 300 less than one year ago.

The number of unemployed residents declined in all counties in the region and resulted in lower unemployment rates in

April. The largest reduction in the region and 5th largest in the state occurred in Pepin County where the unemployment rate declined from 7.1 percent in March to 5.3 percent in April. This was followed by the reduction in Clark County from 7.8 percent unemployed in March to 6.2 percent in April.

The unemployment rate in Barron County declined from 7.1 to 5.6 percent in April. The strike with Johnson Truck Bodies in Barron County was visible in the nonfarm job estimates with the reduction in manufacturing jobs in the county, but the labor force estimation considers these workers job-attached and includes them among the employed.

In Polk County the unemployment rate dropped from 7.1 percent in March to 5.8 percent in April, in Dunn County the rate declined from 5.7 to 4.9 percent, in St. Croix County it declined from 6.2 to 5.4 percent and in Pierce County the unemployment rate dropped from 5.6 to 4.8 percent in April.



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